This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of processing image
2 data representing at least one image, the method
3 comprising:
4   receiving information including at least one of
5 image quality information and image use information;
6   selecting a first encoding format from a
7 plurality of supported encoding formats as a function of
8 said received information;
9   selecting the quality level at which the at least
10 one image represented by said image data is to be encoded
11 using the selected encoding format based on the received
12 information, wherein the quality level is selected from a
13 plurality of supported encoding quality levels including at
14 least a first quality level which is a lossless or near
15 loss-less quality level; a second quality level which is a
16 contribution quality level; and a third quality level which
17 is a distribution quality level, the distribution quality
18 level being the level of image quality to be used for
19 distribution of the image to an end viewer;
20   encoding said image data according to the first
21 encoding format to thereby generate first encoded image
22 data representing said image; and
23   storing the first encoded image data using a
24 digital data storage device.

1 Claim 2 (currently amended): The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the received information includes image quality
3 information that indicates a desired minimum level of image
4 quality at which an image is to be preserved.

1 Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 2, wherein the
2 step of selecting the first encoding format includes
3 selecting the first encoding format to be an encoding
4 format which will preserve the image at a level of quality
5 at least as good as the indicated minimum level of image
6 quality.

1 Claim 4 (currently amended): The method of claim 1,
2 wherein the received information includes image quality
3 information that indicates the quality of the at least one
4 image represented by said image data.

1 Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 4, wherein the
2 step of selecting the first encoding format includes
3 selecting the first encoding format to be an encoding
4 format which will preserve the image at a level of quality
5 equal to or lower than the indicated quality of the at
6 least one image represented by said image data.

1 Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 4, further
2 comprising:
3   analyzing said image data to generate image
4 quality information received in said step of receiving
5 information.

1 Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1, further
2 comprising:
3   querying a human for said image quality
4 information.

1 Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the
2 received information further includes data storage
3 limitation information; and
4   wherein the step of selecting a first encoding
5 format is further performed as a function of the received
6 data storage limitation information.

1 Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the
2 received information further includes image source
3 information which indicates a format in which the at least
4 one image represented by said image data was previously
5 stored; and
6   wherein the step of selecting a first encoding
7 format is further performed as a function of the received
8 image source information.

1 Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the
2 received information further includes image source
3 information which indicates a type of data storage media
4 which was previously used to store said image data prior to
5 performing said encoding step; and
6   wherein the step of selecting a first encoding
7 format is further performed as a function of the data
8 storage media information.

1 Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 10, wherein the
2 indicated type of data storage media includes at least one
3 of digital tape, analog tape and movie film.

Claims 12-14 (Canceled)

1   Claim 15 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 ~~13~~,
2   wherein the received information further includes data
3   storage limitation information; and
4   wherein the step of selecting the quality level
5   at which the at least one image is encoded is further
6   performed as a function of the received data storage
7   limitation information.

1   Claim 16 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 ~~13~~,
2   wherein the received information further includes image
3   source information which indicates a format in which the at
4   least one image was previously stored; and
5   wherein the step of selecting the quality level
6   at which the at least one image is encoded is further
7   performed as a function of the received image source
8   information.

1   Claim 17 (currently amended): The method of claim 1 ~~14~~,
2   wherein the received information further includes image
3   source information which indicates a type of data storage
4   media which was previously used to store said image prior
5   to performing said encoding; and
6   wherein the step of selecting the quality level
7   at which the at least one image is encoded is further
8   performed as a function of the received image source
9   limitation information.

1   Claim 18 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said
2   plurality of image formats includes at least two of the
3   encoding formats in the set of MPEG, JPEG and DV encoding
4   formats.

1 Claim 19 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said
2 image use information indicates at least one data
3 distribution use.

1 Claim 20 (original): The method of claim 19, wherein the
2 indicated data distribution use includes at least one of
3 cable television, satellite broadcast, terrestrial
4 television and Internet.

1 Claim 21 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said
2 image use information indicates an image archiving use.

1 Claim 22 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 1,~~
2 ~~further comprising:~~ A method of processing image data
3 representing at least one image, the method comprising:
4   receiving information including at least one of
5 image quality information and image use information;
6   selecting a first encoding format from a
7 plurality of supported encoding formats as a function of
8 said received information;
9   encoding said image data according to the first
10 encoding format to thereby generate first encoded image
11 data representing said image;
12   storing the first encoded image data using a digital
13 data storage device;
14   retrieving the first encoded image data from the
15 digital data storage device;
16   converting the first encoded image data from the
17 first encoding format to a second encoding format to
18 produce second encoded image data, the second encoded
19 format being different from the first encoding format; and
20   outputting the second encoded image data.

1 Claim 23 (original): The method of claim 22, further
2 comprising:
3   converting the first encoded image data from the
4 first encoding format to a third encoding format to produce
5 third encoded image data, the third encoded format being
6 different from the first and second encoding formats; and
7   outputting the third encoded image data.

1 Claim 24 (original): The method of claim 22, wherein the
2 step of converting the first encoded image data from the
3 first encoding format to a second encoding format includes:
4   decoding said first encoded image data to
5 generate decoded image data; and
6   re-encoding said decoded image data according to
7 the second encoding format.

1 Claim 25 (currently amended): A digital storage medium
2 comprising computer executable instructions for controlling
3 a computer system to:
4   receive information including at least one of
5 image quality information and image use information;
6   select a first encoding format from a plurality
7 of supported encoding formats as a function of said
8 received information;
9   select the quality level at which the at least
10 one image represented by said image data is to be encoded
11 using the selected encoding format based on the received
12 information, wherein the quality level is selected from a
13 plurality of supported encoding quality levels including at
14 least a first quality level which is a lossless or near
15 loss-less quality level; a second quality level which is a

16 intermediate quality level that is lower than said first

17 quality level; and a third quality level which is a

18 distribution quality level, the distribution quality level

19 being lower than the second quality level and being the

20 level of image quality to be used for distribution of the

21 image to an end viewer;

22   encode image data according to the first encoding

23 format to thereby generate first encoded image data

24 representing said image; and

25   store the first encoded image data using a

26 digital data storage device.

1   Claim 26 (currently amended): A system for processing and

2   storing at least one of audio and video data, the system

3   comprising:

4   a compression module supporting a plurality of

5   different encoding formats, the compression module

6   including a plurality of encoding modules, each encoding

7   module capable of performing data encoding according to a

8   different standardized encoding format;

9   a control module for selecting from the plurality

10 of encoding formats, an encoding format to be used with a

11 given set of data supplied to the compression module;

12   means for selecting the quality level at which the at

13 least one image represented by said image data is to be

14 encoded using the selected encoding format based on the

15 received information, wherein the quality level is selected

16 from a plurality of supported encoding quality levels

17 including at least a first quality level which is a

18 lossless or near loss-less quality level; a second quality

19 level which is an intermediate quality level which is lower

20 than said first quality level; and a third quality level

21   which is lower than said intermediate quality level, the

22   third quality level being a distribution quality level, the

23   distribution quality level being the level of image quality

24   to be used for distribution of the image to a plurality of

25   end viewers; and

26   a data storage device coupled to the compression

27   module for storing encoded data generated by said

28   compression module.

1   Claim 27 (currently amended): ~~The system of claim 26,~~

2   ~~further comprising:~~ A system for processing and storing at

3   least one of audio and video data, the system comprising:

4   a compression module supporting a plurality of

5   different encoding formats, the compression module

6   including a plurality of encoding modules, each encoding

7   module capable of performing data encoding according to a

8   different standardized encoding format;

9   a control module for selecting from the plurality

10   of encoding formats, an encoding format to be used with a

11   given set of data supplied to the compression module;

12   a data storage device coupled to the compression

13   module for storing encoded data generated by said

14   compression module;

15   a data retrieval module for retrieving encoded

16   data stored in the data storage device; and

17   a transcoder module for converting encoded data

18   retrieved from the data storage device from a format in

19   which the data was stored to a different data format.

1   Claim 28 (currently amended): The system of claim 27 ~~26~~,

2   wherein the transcoder module includes:

3   a plurality of decoders, each decoder in the
4   plurality of decoder circuits being capable of decoding at
5   least one of said encoding formats supported by the
6   compression module.

1   Claim 29 (original): The system of claim 27, wherein the
2   transcoder module further includes:
3   a plurality of encoders coupled to the plurality
4   of decoder, the plurality of encoders including encoders
5   which support different encoding formats.

1   Claim 30 (original): The system of claim 28, wherein the
2   transcoder module further includes:
3   means for outputting data generated by multiple
4   encoders included in said plurality of encoders, from the
5   same decoded data generated by one of said plurality of
6   decoders.

1   Claim 31 (original): The system of claim 27, further
2   comprising:
3   an analysis module capable of performing an
4   indexing operation on encoded data and generating index
5   information therefrom; and
6   a wrapper module coupled to said compression
7   module, the storage device and the analysis module, the
8   wrapper module supplying encoded data generated by said
9   compression module to said analysis module and
10   incorporating index information received from said analysis
11   module into a file with the encoded data supplied to said
12   analysis module.

1 Claim 32 (original): The system of claim 31, wherein the
2 data analysis module includes:
3   decoder circuitry for decoding encoded data; and
4   an indexing circuit for generating indexing
5 information by analyzing decoded data generated by said
6 decoder circuitry.

1 Claim 33 (original): The system of claim 31, wherein said
2 data retrieval module is coupled to said storage device and
3 the analysis module, the data retrieval module controlling
4 the retrieval of encoded data from the storage device to be
5 supplied to the analysis module for indexing; and
6   wherein the analysis module indexes retrieved
7 encoded data to generate index information.

1 Claim 34 (original): The system of claim 33, further
2 comprising:
3   an archive storage manager module for coupling
4 the data retrieval module to the analysis module and for
5 adding index information generated by said analysis module
6 from processing retrieved encoded data to the file from
7 which the encoded data was retrieved.

1 Claim 35 (original): The system of claim 27, further
2 comprising:
3   a preview module coupled to said transcoder for
4 displaying images generated from encoded data produced by
5 said transcoder.

1 Claim 36 (original): The system of claim 28, further
2 comprising:

3   a preview module coupled to said compression
4   module for displaying images generated from encoded data
5   generated by said compression module.

1   Claim 37 (currently amended): The system of claim 27 ~~26~~,
2   further comprising:
3   means for receiving information including at
4   least one of image quality information and image use
5   information; and
6   wherein the control module includes:
7   means for selecting the encoding format
8   to be used with a given set of data supplied to
9   the compression module as a function of said
10   received information.

1   Claim 38 (currently amended): A method of operating a
2   system to process image data representing an image, the
3   method comprising:
4   receiving image source information indicating at
5   least one of a type of storage media previously used to
6   store the image data and a storage format in which the
7   image data was stored;
8   automatically selecting a first encoding format   .
9   from a plurality of supported encoding formats as a
10   function of said received information;
11   operating the system to encode said image data
12   according to the first encoding format to thereby generate
13   first encoded image data representing said image; ~~and~~
14   storing the first encoded image data using a digital data
15   storage device<u>;</u>
16   <u>retrieving the first encoded image data from the</u>
17   <u>digital data storage device;</u>

18   converting the first encoded image data from the
19 first encoding format to a second encoding format to
20 produce second encoded image data, the second encoded
21 format being different from the first encoding format; and
22   outputting the second encoded image data.

1 Claim 39 (original): The method of claim 38, wherein the
2 received image source information indicates the type of
3 storage media previously used to be at least one of digital
4 tape, analog tape, and movie film.

1 Claim 40 (original): The method of claim 38, wherein the
2 received image source information indicates the source
3 format to be one of a JPEG, a DV and an MPEG format.

1 Claim 41 (canceled):

1 Claim 42 (original): The method of claim 41, further
2 comprising:
3   converting the first encoded image data from the
4 first encoding format to a third encoding format to produce
5 third encoded image data, the third encoded format being
6 different from the first and second encoding formats; and
7   outputting the third encoded image data.

1 Claim 43-50 (canceled):